

Preserving
documents

SEPs deliver
value

Commitment
to safety

Devices prove
effective

• CLOSED • Circuit

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

FEBRUARY 2023



Teamwork solutions



CLOSED Circuit

VOL. 44 NO. 10, February 2023

Editor: AMBER RODRIGUEZ

Graphic Designer: DANIELLE ORR

Do you have an idea for a story?
Contact publicaffairs@wapa.gov



**Western Area
Power Administration**

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213
720.962.7050
www.wapa.gov | publicaffairs@wapa.gov

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS ISSUE PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Contents

Preserving WAPA's historical documents <i>Rocky Mountain moves historical records to National Archives storage facility.</i>	1
Special emphasis programs deliver value <i>Ensuring WAPA takes affirmative steps to provide equal opportunity for all employees.</i>	3
Get to know the Assistant Administrator for Corporate Liaison <i>Dionne Thompson leads WAPA's national relations, government affairs strategies.</i>	5
Pest control devices prove effective at facilities <i>More than two years later, experimental solution still shows positive results.</i>	7
Belonging, critical to good mental health <i>Mental health struggles can make it difficult for employees to feel safe.</i>	9
Celebrating WAPA turning 45 <i>WAPA celebrated its 45th anniversary through an all-employee meeting.</i>	11
Top 10 stories from 2022 <i>At the end of every year, Closed Circuit takes a moment to reflect.</i>	13
Organizational, individual commitment to safety <i>It's a team effort to strengthen WAPA's safety culture.</i>	16
508 Corner: Tips for accessibility <i>PowerPoint can identify many common accessibility issues.</i>	18
Rapid Recaps • Secretary Granholm visits WAPA	18
Brief Transmissions • WAPA has a new strategic plan • Updated Paid Parental Leave guidance • WAPA's Fitness Policy updated	19

On the cover
Desktop Support Specialist
David Darmody snapped
this image of a transmission
structure near Bismarck, North
Dakota, in September 2022.





On Oct. 24, 2022, An employee of the National Archives and Records Administration checks out the latest in dock of 250 WAPA permanent and long-term temporary records boxes for its Rocky Mountain region. The records will be processed and housed in NARA's Federal Records Center, in Broomfield, Colo. Photo by Jen Neville.

Preserving WAPA's historical documents

Story and photos by Jen Neville

In an age of email, online forms and electronically signed contracts, paper gets a bad rap. However, many of WAPA's historically significant records are typed or written down, including old land surveys, original power contracts, construction and engineering records and much more. On Oct. 24, the Rocky Mountain region transferred more than 250 boxes of records to the National Archives and Records Administration's Federal Records Center in Broomfield, Colo.

continued on Page 2



Supply Technician Lead **Jarrold Birdsall** uses a forklift, Oct. 24, to bring down pallets of record boxes prepared for transfer to NARA. Photo by Jen Neville.

At the FRC repository, these historical documents will continue to be protected and preserved for WAPA's future use and reference.

"The FRC is designed with environmental and other controls to support the long-term management of paper records," WAPA Records and Information Management Program Manager **Chris Magee** said.

The transferred records now take up 253 cubic feet of storage in NARA's Broomfield FRC, which frees up space

in WAPA's Loveland warehouse. Several of the records are permanent, meaning NARA will keep them forever and eventually make them publicly available. Other records are classified as "long-term temporary," meaning WAPA needs them for business use anywhere between 50 to 100 years.

"Many of the records we sent to the FRC are life-of-asset records created in the 1950s to 1970s. The type of paper from that era can disintegrate and become more fragile with time; think

onion skin carbon copy paper," Magee said.

"Storing these records in the FRC's optimal conditions, lengthens the time these records are useable," he added.

The work to prepare the records for transfer took almost three quarters of a year.

"This was a heavy lift to have our team focused on meeting NARA deadlines for submitting paper records. Our team, including Chris and Sara, did a great job reaching our goal while navigating pandemic conditions and still maintaining our daily operational priorities," said Rocky Mountain Administrative Officer **Kellie Petty**, mentioning Records and Information Management Specialist **Sara Frey**.

"And now, these vital documents that still relate to the work we do today, are protected and available for decades to come," Petty said.

The Loveland Records program contracted support from Cherokee Federal in January 2022 to inventory each box's content as well as organize, label and stage the boxes on seven pallets. Then the Records team updated WAPA's record tracking system as well as submitted a transfer request to NARA.

"This effort could not be done by any single person," Magee said. "This required the combined effort of WAPA's Records and Information Management Program, RM's administrative officer and management analysts, RM's Facilities and Property Management Program, the records owners themselves and staff at the National Archives at Denver."

"I'm excited to see offices take control of their legacy paper records and better understand how they relate to current work," he added.

Now, WAPA's most important records for Rocky Mountain have a permanent home, where they are accessible and properly cared for, while freeing up storage space in the Loveland warehouse.

"This effort embodied WAPA's mission to 'Seek. Share. Partner.' Everyone came together, and we solved some long-term information management challenges," Magee said. □

Note: The author is a management analyst.



Special emphasis programs deliver value

By Peggy Wooten and Charles Montanez

W

APA remains committed to providing electricity in many rural areas, including serving many tribal customers across our 15-state service territory.



Native Americans also make up about 2.56% of WAPA's employees. To help understand more about their perspectives, in November 2022, WAPA held a discussion panel with three employees of Native American heritage. Panelists including Program and Regulatory Advisor **Ethel Redhair** from Desert Southwest, Electrical Engineer **Randall Medicine Bear** from Rocky Mountain and Public Utilities Specialist **Christopher Sirvas** from Upper Great Plains, reflected on their experiences as Native Americans growing up, their journey in life and building a career. They each spoke about the challenges of being a member of mainstream America, while staying connected to their Native American heritage.

The panelists also noted that while Native Americans living on a reservation have a better opportunity to stay connected to their heritage, they often have fewer chances to complete their education or prosper. Parts of some reservations still do not have basic services like water, electricity and access to computers and the internet. Conversely, individuals who leave the reservation for opportunity lose touch with legacy and traditions. Today, many Native Americans cannot speak in their native language.

While Native American Heritage Month is celebrated in November, heritage communities celebrate several observances throughout the year. In March, communities celebrate Irish American Heritage Month. Then in October, communities celebrate Italian American Heritage Month and Polish American Heritage Month. WAPA and the Department of Energy observe many such heritage celebrations throughout the year. You may see festivals and events planned for these groups and others in your local communities.

Further, the federal government has taken steps over the years to go beyond celebrating heritage to providing equal opportunities for all employees. Through presidential proclamations, executive orders and public laws, the federal government has designated special emphasis programs to ensure that federal organizations take affirmative steps. SEPs focus on underrepresented groups (e.g., minorities, women, people with various disabilities, etc.), and although there are several requirements for SEPs, the most visible is using observances that create an opportunity to bring people together with the focus to educate each other, celebrate contributions and work toward a future that is inclusive of all people.

SEP observances help with understanding the past, as well as present experiences and perspectives of groups that were traditionally not represented or subjected to discrimination in the workforce. These events

represent a way to help appreciate these groups' points of view and their valuable contributions to society.

Our nation derives strength from the diversity of its population, and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all. Consequently, as the nation's largest employer, the federal government upholds and honors its commitment to equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion.

"The more we understand each other, the better we can relate to each other," said Equal Employment Specialist **Peggy Wooten**.

SEPs and their observances offer us the chance to learn about the many cultures that make America better through diversity. Consider learning more about these groups this year, their past, present and their future as well. □

Note: The authors are from the Office of Economic, Impact and Diversity.

Federal SEP observances

January - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February - Black History Month

March - Women's History Month

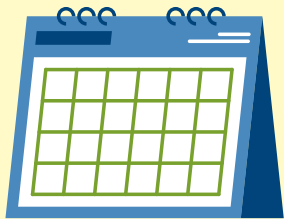
May - Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

June - Pride Month

October - Hispanic Heritage Month

October - Disability Employment Awareness Month

November - Native American Heritage Month



Get to know WAPA's Assistant Administrator for Corporate Liaison

A

s Senior Vice President and Assistant Administrator for Corporate Liaison in the Washington, D.C., Liaison Office,

Dionne Thompson is responsible for developing and leading WAPA's national relations and government affairs strategies. Working near The Hill (Capitol Hill), she routinely interacts and engages with members of Congress and their staff; liaises with the Department of Energy, Office of Management and Budget and other Executive Branch agencies regarding WAPA's activities; and builds and maintains strong working relationships with national trade and energy industry associations.



“ I prefer frequent and open communication, and my door is always open. Listening to learn is key. I also try to foster collaboration since teamwork, as is commonly stated, has no “I” in it! Finally, I believe recognition of effort is an important part of leading. ”

Thompson has been involved in energy and environmental issues in Washington, D.C., since 1993 when she was a staff counsel to former Sen. J. Bennett Johnston (D-LA) on the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and later for former Sen. Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA). She also worked as an attorney for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission between 2003 and 2009 where she was a legal advisor to the chairman in 2005, an advisor on market rates and tariffs, and Senate liaison in the Office of External Affairs where she covered electric transmission, natural gas and hydroelectric issues.

Closed Circuit sat down with Thompson to get to know her better.

What brought you to WAPA initially?

I had a background in hydropower coming from Reclamation. I learned electricity law in general having been at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and a D.C. law firm, plus my time on Capitol Hill with the Senate Energy committee. So, the combination of those experiences seemed perfect for the job in the

Washington Liaison Office. I also have enjoyed public service and the sense of meaningful participation I've gotten from it over the past 25+ years. I've been happy to continue that service here at WAPA.

What has been your most rewarding experience at WAPA so far?

Being able to assist with promoting WAPA's needs and securing assistance on Capitol Hill so far have been most rewarding, particularly in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act last year and now in the fiscal year 2023 funding cycle.

What is something most people do not know about you?

I am a member of the Barrow, Alaska, Polar Bear Club. I jumped into the ice-laden Arctic Ocean and completely submerged – and paid for the privilege!

What are you reading right now? Do you have a favorite author?

“Atomic Habits” by James Clear. It's a guide on how to change your habits

and get 1% better every day. Using a framework called the Four Laws of Behavior Change. I don't currently have a favorite author, though I have enjoyed a range of authors over time.

What is your style for both communication and leadership?

I prefer frequent and open communication, and my door is always open. Listening to learn is key. I also try to foster collaboration since teamwork, as is commonly stated, has no “I” in it! Finally, I believe recognition of effort is an important part of leading.

During WAPA's period of maximum telework, what do you think was the most valuable lesson you've learned as a leader?

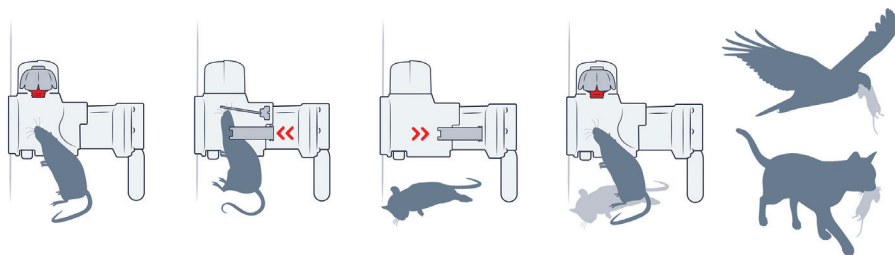
Communicating and sharing information to the greatest extent possible is important. Especially in times where an affirmative effort to communicate is required, such as in maximum telework, in order for employees to feel connected and part of the team. Job satisfaction and retention are dependent upon this. □



A pest control device placed near a building entrance/egress point at the Folsom office. Photo by Kristen Dalldorf.

Pest control devices prove effective at facilities

Pest control is an important aspect of facility operations that goes overlooked by most employees. When it works well, most people won't even think about it. When it fails, it can be impossible to ignore.



Pests can cause property damage, carry diseases, and even, disrupt or destroy critical systems. This is a concern that WAPA takes seriously. Reliability of the bulk electric system is paramount and requires the attention and expertise of hundreds of employees across the organization every day. This reliability being threatened by a rodent, for instance, is unacceptable.

Rodents can prove especially problematic at unstaffed facilities, where employees may not immediately notice an infestation. Historically, WAPA's facilities have used poison bait to manage vermin, but that solution introduced problems of its own and hasn't always proven to be effective.

For instance, mice must visit the bait box repeatedly in order to ingest a lethal dose of bait. Additionally, poisoned mice and rats could end up dying in ductwork or other areas in which they remain unnoticed until they decompose. Even worse, they could be eaten by other animals, resulting in inadvertent harm or death to non-target species.

In 2019, Desert Southwest employees began experimenting with alternative solutions to their struggle against rodent infestation at a substation in Cochise County, Arizona. The solution suggested by Headquarters biologist **Tim Langer** was more humane than poison, more reliable than snap traps, and more effective than other solutions deployed in the past.

The newer, mountable devices use bait to entice rodents to stick their heads up into a vertical tube. When the rodent climbs high enough, it triggers a striker powered by a carbon dioxide cartridge, which instantly kills the pest. The carcass then slides down out of the tube to be collected or scavenged later, and the trap automatically resets.

The unit fires 24 times without human intervention, which means it doesn't have to be frequently monitored or maintained. A recent upgrade

even comes with an optional feature that allows for remote monitoring of the device, particularly handy for some of WAPA's remote locations.

Desert Southwest ordered 15 of the units to test their efficiency and learned quickly that they might indeed be a viable solution. Shortly after installing two units at an Arizona substation, where they had problems with rodents interfering with air conditioner filters, crews found a number of packrats that had already been exterminated.

Other facilities across WAPA had promising results as well, drawing attention from other sites facing similar concerns with rodent residents. Rocky Mountain also deployed several units for testing, and employees have been pleased with the results.

"They are definitely doing their job," said Electronic Integrated Systems Mechanic **Joshua Christianson**. "I've had to swap out the carbon dioxide cartridges on the busier ones."

Christianson found that one problem was the fact that some of the rodents were too small to stick their heads into the traps. He worked with Langer to develop a simple solution.

"I just fill the freestanding bases with gravel and put a rock or two under the wall-mounted ones," he said. "I think the only problem I have noticed is that one on a freestanding base keeps getting knocked over by something. I'm assuming it's either a marmot trying to get the bait or a scavenger removing carcasses. Filling it with gravel does the trick for the most part."

Even with this small inconvenience in mind, the devices have continued to prove effective.

"They still work when they are tipped over, from the looks of it," he said.

He also noted that the devices could be a good investment when compared to traditional traps, as they can fire

multiple times before they need attention.

"Having a craft employee go check and reset traps after every kill isn't free," Christianson said. "That time adds up, and I think these will eventually pay for themselves in places where we have major rodent problems."

He mentioned that the number of kills had tapered off since the first two months after installation, demonstrating that there are notably fewer rodents attempting to make their homes in the facilities. Christianson also found that the devices were more enticing to pests than other solutions have been.

"Our inside glue traps are mostly empty lately," he said. "That tells me the new devices are getting most of them before they can try to make it inside."

"The devices have been deployed throughout Upper Great Plains where portions of the region have been so impressed, they're looking to expand the number of traps set out. Sierra Nevada have placed them at three facilities where they've learned that placement is key and are working to maximize effectiveness by experimenting with placement, bait types and trap density," said Langer.

For his part, Langer – who helped to identify these devices as a potential solution in the first place – is optimistic. Not only because they seem to be working, but because the success demonstrates the value of partnership across WAPA.

"Everybody faces their own obstacles and issues, but solutions exist, somewhere," Langer said. "When we are comfortable enough to ask the question and solicit answers, we might find that somebody in another region or another program can step in to help. Finding and testing these devices were the product of discussions that may end up solving a problem we've been dealing with for decades. It's one more win for collaboration."

"The silos and workload can sometimes cause people to perceive that improvements are difficult to impossible," said Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist **Sean Berry**. "This is proof that we have a lot to offer and we should continue to speak up when we have a solution." □

Belonging, critical to good mental health

Good mental health is not always easy to establish or maintain. People can find their mental health struggles complicated by psychological patterns, undiagnosed or misdiagnosed illness, agony anchors, trauma triggers and unresolved grief. But there is hope to improve mental health.



Paying attention to how each employee is doing mentally – and addressing their concerns – is important for both for the individual and the organization as a whole.

“In the past two years, grief and loss have been profound around the globe,” said Chief Public Affairs Officer **Teresa Waugh**, speaking about overlapping crises of social and political unrest, polarized societal views, historic drought, extreme wildfires and the atrocities of global conflict. “Many of our colleagues have experienced tremendous and unexpected loss. Grief can run deep because it is often not easy to process or to resolve.”

She explained that optimism and finding joy in the face of despair have been particular interests of hers for decades. She also explained that difficulties with mental and emotional well-being can have an impact on one’s professional life, as they are often tied to “a sense of belonging.”

In 2020, a Deloitte Survey showed that belonging, along with well-being, is a top concern for organizations around the world through the year 2024. Of those surveyed, 93% also agreed that a sense of belonging drives performance.

Mental health struggles can make it difficult for employees to feel as though they belong. They can lead to individuals feeling isolated, trapped within their minds and unable to connect. As people attempt to process grief, trauma and other challenges, it can be easy for them to lose sight of the fact that others may be able to help.

“There is no shame in seeking support and practicing self-care,” said Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** in a May 25 email to employees. “In fact, I encourage you to do so. Whether it be fear of violence, or any number of other world or personal events, these are incredibly challeng-

ing times for many. Take the time you need to recenter and use the resources we have available.”

Waugh provided several suggestions for helping to stay mentally healthy during challenging times. Her first suggestion was for employees to check their assumptions.

“Mental health is impacted by how we interpret information,” she explained. “Emotional health is how we feel about the information that we process. It’s crucial to check our assumptions to make sure what we are processing is true and, whenever possible, to understand the why behind what is happening to us.”

She also suggested taking ownership of one’s own emotions and working to manage them as well as possible.

“Organizations with strong cultures exhibit social sensitivity, which is an ability of group members to properly perceive each other’s emotions,” she said, “but it’s the individual’s responsibility to manage their own emotions. For those who have suffered and are still struggling with loss, grief counseling can be a lifeline and provide a solid footing from which to navigate. Mentors and coaches can be found on Learning Nucleus.”

She mentioned the importance of bringing the right mindset to the right situation, which she referred to as “slowing down to show up.”

“It’s important to be ready to show up at any given time with the right mindset,” she said. “To do that, it is imperative to slow down and rehearse correct emotional responses. When under pressure or becoming reactive, take pause. One deep breath may turn a reaction into a response.”

In addition, she suggested taking time to help others feel as though they belong and making an effort to listen to and hear them.

“Let’s aim to trade judgement with empathy, sarcasm with support and, when in doubt, be inclusive,” she advised.

“Let’s not cast a stigma on those who seek support,” said LeBeau. “Collectively we can make a difference in each other’s lives by simply being kind, showing grace and offering support. Let’s do what we say, and that is to do what is right, and do what is safe. I want you to know that I support you and your colleagues support you. Let’s do what we can to support each other.”

Employee Assistance Program

One option that is always available is the Employee Assistance Program. The EAP is a partnership between the Department of Energy and mental health service Espyr. It is open to federal WAPA employees and their family members.

The EAP offers sessions for the purposes of problem identification, short-term counseling, referral for long-term treatment or rehabilitation and follow-up. The service is completely confidential, and it can help employees in terms of managing stress, controlling drug and alcohol use, increasing productivity and motivation, overcoming loss, handling personal problems and more.

Employees using the EAP will receive a personal assessment to determine their needs and, if they are eligible, they will be referred to a licensed provider within 48 hours of their initial call. □

Contact the EAP

Employees can reach the EAP at any time for immediate assistance. For more information visit **myWAPA, Employee Resources, Employee Assistance Program.**





Celebrating WAPA turning

O

n Dec. 15, 2022, several offices across the organization worked together to commemorate WAPA's 45th Anniversary celebration through an all-employee meeting. The occasion was presented through a "WAPA News" broadcast. Co-anchors **Lisa O'Brien** and **Troy Steadman** provided segments from the "newsroom" located at Headquarters in Lakewood, Colo., and several "on location" spots.

Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** spoke about the State of WAPA and her perspective on what makes the 45th anniversary special. She discussed how we connect through our shared history, marveled at what we have achieved and looked ahead at the many important issues facing WAPA.

It was a perfect opportunity to reflect on some of the accomplishments WAPA teams have made as part of the strategic plan for the past 10 years. Senior executives highlighted several accomplishments from the *Strategic Roadmap 2024*, including:

- Chief Operating Officer **Tina Ko** discussed how the Assent Management program has matured, innovated and developed automated dashboards that enable risk-based evaluation of assets using health and consequence data.
- Desert Southwest Regional Manager **Jack Murray** explained how the Human Performance Improvement & Just Culture program was introduced as a Tactical Action Plan to the Roadmap, with the goal to improve the design, operate and maintain WAPA's systems.
- Murray also shared that in WAPA's earlier days, we began with separate Repayment Study systems in each of our regions and how WAPA developed a standard, WAPA-wide Power Repayment Study platform.
- Chief Administrative Officer **Jennifer Rodgers** shared how through the Roadmap 2024, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and a culture assessment, WAPA formalized its commitment to leadership development with the launch of a dedicated program office in 2020.
- Upper Great Plains Regional Manager **Lloyd Linke** explained how the first strategic target area in *Strategic Roadmap 2024* was Mission Critical Customer Services in an Evolving Industry, which covered evaluating markets and similar constructs. Since 2014, WAPA has accomplished so much in both evaluating and joining markets that made sense.
- Chief Information Officer **Mike Montoya** shared how during the course of Roadmap 2024, IT completed many high-profile, complex projects. Projects that fundamentally changed – improved and often simplified – how WAPA operates through the IT Evolution initiative.

Historical moment flashbacks

News anchor Steadman took participants back in time with history flashbacks. He first reported from 1952 where we found him at the Dispatcher's Control Room at Parker Dam, in California. Then he traveled to 2016 during a big event for Communication employees when the Packet



Auditor **Lisa O'Brien** and Program Manager **Troy Steadman** on screen as co-anchors of "WAPA News" during the organization's 45th Anniversary all employee meeting.

Standards Analysis and Integration Network Team charter was signed. From there he jumped to 2017, when the Punta Lima Substation, in Puerto Rico, suffered severe flooding from the storm surge during Hurricane Maria.

Later, we found Steadman "on scene" July 23, 2018, at the Carr fire in Northern California. High temperatures and extreme drought conditions made this fire grow out of control. But WAPA employees came together in a unified response. During Steadman's last history flashback report, he joined the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers contract discussions that happened early in 2022.

Contest winners

The anniversary celebration also announced the winner of WAPA's 45th Anniversary Photo Contest. The contest was open for several months in 2022 to all employees in the organization and their family members. More than 85 photos were submitted. Sierra Nevada High Voltage Electrician **Brian Marsteller** won the contest with his photo of a transmission tower and sunrise reflection the morning of Sept. 23, 2022, near Tracy, Calif. Public Affairs Specialist and field correspondent **Eric Barendsen** also shared the top 10 photos, which are available on Flickr.

In addition to the photo contest, employees were asked to help develop an inspiring message to communicate who WAPA is as an organization, its bright future ahead and help communicate *Power Forward 2030*. Nineteen employees participated in the contest from all over WAPA. Chief Strategy Officer **Kerry Whitford** announced Rocky Mountain Administrative Assistant **Rosemary Black** as the winner with this message: "Powering a bright future: We are a professional, innovative organization dedicated to empowering communities to shine brightly through energy reliability and resiliency." □

View the complete event at [myWAPA](#), Employee Resources, All-Employee Meetings.





stories of 2022

The stories *Closed Circuit* told in 2022 covered a wide range of topics on WAPA's operations. Our services, programs and employees embraced technology, collaborated and went the extra mile together to meet WAPA's mission and goals.

We tried to capture your numerous great stories that spoke of WAPA's value and importance, which made it hard to narrow down to only ten. As the acting editor, I hope you will enjoy looking back at some of the great accomplishments we made carrying out our mission to safely provide reliable, cost-based hydropower and transmission to our customers and the communities we serve. □



10 **Open Mic provides innovative learning events**

The Open Mic platform continued to build momentum since its inaugural session in December 2021. The platform informs and educates employees across WAPA who are seeking to learn more about what we do as an organization, the jobs people do on a day-to-day basis and what challenges and opportunities they face in fulfilling our mission. Open Mic promotes a common understanding of WAPA, which is both complex and vast, and allows employees to get to know one another. Each month, a subject matter expert shares information and insights in their area of expertise virtually. This greatly benefits WAPA because it builds a portfolio of material that captures expertise and organizational knowledge. By creating an inclusive dialog, the program also fosters an environment where all of WAPA's functions and people feel valued and seen. Additionally, attendees learn more about WAPA, allowing them to identify potential areas of interest before seeking a detail or competing for a leadership development opportunity.

9 **Twelve entities to become LAP customers in 2024**

Eleven municipalities in Kansas and Nebraska, and one military installation in Colorado, have been approved to receive at-cost federal hydropower from Loveland Area Projects starting Oct. 1, 2024. It is the largest addition to WAPA's customer base since the remarketing of Hoover Dam hydropower in 2017. Many of the new customers, like our current ones, are small rural entities. Having access to affordable hydropower resources and transmission services can be a real benefit. The federal hydropower allocation provides them an at-cost, reliable, clean energy source, and our long-term contracts assure they can tap this resource for many years to come. These new customers include nine Kansas municipalities, two Nebraska municipalities and a U.S. Space Force base.

8 Day in the Life: Trust your camo and journeymen

Foreman II Electrician **Paul Davis** told us the story of what a journeyman's day looks like. From apprentice to journeyman, WAPA trains and develops these employees over a span of years and trusts and relies on them to perform under pressure and in extreme conditions. WAPA's skilled journeymen make up the backbone of our workforce. Whether identifying an issue or executing scheduled maintenance, requesting a clearance or an authorization to work, a journeyman's day is spent maintaining and improving our power system.

7 WAPA executes purchase power funding

WAPA stayed on track to fully expend the \$500 million that it received from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law enacted in November 2021. The funding supports more replacement power and transmission capacity purchases needed primarily due to drought and increasing power market volatility. The funds, and the Purchase Power and Wheeling program more broadly, support grid reliability and stabilize electric power rates for nearly 700 not-for-profit utilities, Native American Tribes, federal and state agencies as well as other WAPA customers. Absent this funding, WAPA's near-term capacity to sustain PPW activities in support of our mission might have been in question.

6 Business intelligence: Share insights, show results

WAPA has massive repositories of data about its assets and operations. Most of it is housed in secure systems, but much of it lives in spreadsheets on employees' computers. Some departments may not know what data other departments have and not all WAPA's systems talk to one another. On March 1, 2022, Information Technology made Microsoft Power BI available WAPA-wide. Power BI's interactive visualizations, combined with its immense reporting capabilities, provide endless analytical opportunities. Now employees can drill down into the data and change or isolate variables to generate unique data modeling based on certain factors to see what could happen. Power BI syncs with source data and refreshes as needed or determined by program offices, eliminating the need to run new reports whenever data changes. Users can be confident that the data they're using is reliable and accurate.

5 New tool saves time, improves inspections

In January 2022, WAPA replaced a tool it had been using since the early 2010s and offered a new one with increased functionality. The new tool enables the organization to more effectively monitor the health of our transmission system and efficiently react to condition issues while continuing to maintain the high level of reliability. The geospatial productivity and collaboration software provides crews a large amount of data that they didn't have before. Field employees use it to record transmission line condition and any vegetation growth or right-of-way concerns as they conduct annual ground and aerial patrols of WAPA's 17,000 plus miles of line.





4 Craft employees practice winter survival skills

In March 2022, more than 25 linemen and communication technicians spent one week in a winter survival course, practicing survival skills with only the tools and equipment that they would have with them while patrolling power lines or otherwise working in the field. The attendees participated in several class-oriented instructional overviews before heading out to the snowy terrain. The course targets Rocky Mountain linemen and communication technicians who respond to onsite or on-line emergencies and potentially face inclement winter weather conditions.

3 Enhancing efficiency through robotic solutions

Last year, WAPA explored robotics and automation as part of the Robotic Process Automation Program Playbook that assists federal agencies in initiating robotics programs and implementing them into their daily processes. Bots help automate manual tasks, which was perfect for the Finance office—the first department at WAPA to implement RPA-based solutions. Instead of manually processing invoices, Finance uses robotic software to read each email that contains an invoice, move that email to a folder, identify the necessary information contained on the invoice and populate that information into a financial database, saving significant staff time.



2 Storm shines spotlight on WAPA-wide teamwork

On July 17, a powerful microburst with 80 mile-per-hour winds damaged multiple high-voltage transmission lines in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community north of Phoenix, Arizona. More than 40,000 customers lost power locally and in the greater Phoenix area. On July 19, the event was declared an emergency due to the criticality of the line for safety and reliability. The all-hands-on-deck effort resulted in WAPA crews building and energizing a temporary line in two weeks rather than the expected three. This big accomplishment happened thanks to outstanding work by our linemen, dispatchers, engineers and staff who live up to WAPA's core value to "Serve like your lights depend on it."

1 Sierra Nevada reduces CVP power bills

Sierra Nevada is reducing customer bills by \$8-10 million annually starting this year, due to a large reduction in interest expense that helps WAPA keep costs down for the Power Revenue Requirement. The reduced power bills resulted from the Bureau of Reclamation completing the CVP Final Cost Allocation Study and finding that CVP customers had repaid the original capital investment eight years ahead of schedule. With the CVP facilities fully paid for, customers will see lower rates. The reduced PRR improves the value, affordability and competitiveness of CVP's hydropower product.



Organizational and individual commitment to safety

By Jamie Withers

Strengthening WAPA's safety culture takes a team effort. It combines organizational leadership efforts to identify, manage and reduce hazards in the workplace with employees' dedication to communication and practicing safety in all they do.

Our safety culture becomes stronger and more effective when these two elements come together. Consider the following safety practices this year.

Communication importance

Communication lies at the center of our safety culture, and it branches out in several ways. This includes discussing incident prevention during job hazard analysis briefings or tailgate meetings; job-site observations conducted by supervisors, managers and safety specialists; and experienced crew leaders sharing lessons learned and mentoring new employees. We protect ourselves and others by always keeping the lines of communication open.

Communication also includes educating employees during meetings by presenting safety moments at every meeting. WAPA has a variety of resources available to help in this process including the Safety and Occupational Health webpage, the bimonthly newsletter: *Safety Works* and Safety Corner articles like this one in the *Closed Circuit*. These resources provide important topics that can be presented in safety meetings and other discussions with coworkers.

Another way to promote safety on an individual level is communicating shared safety experiences with others through Learning Summaries and Near-Miss Reports. Incident prevention is rooted in these communication tools that provide background on safety incidents, contributing factors, lessons learned and questions for discussion.

Near-miss reporting

WAPA employees submitted 24 Near-Miss Reports to the Safety Office during 2022. That is three times more than the previous year and a notable achievement, but we can do better.

Near-miss reporting is a solid sign of a strong safety culture and open communication. Employees are not required to report close calls; however, when they disclose them voluntarily, it shows their commitment to help others learn from their experiences.

Near-miss events often precede more serious safety incidents when left

unreported. On the flipside, increased near-miss reporting has been shown to decrease serious incidents. This is because reporting helps employees get more informed, aware and proactive about safety practices. The Safety office urges all employees to continue this trend of increased near miss reporting in 2023.

Reducing distractions

Limiting distractions around us is something we can all do daily. Distractions take our eyes and mind off task, reduce our spatial awareness and place us and others in danger's path. Getting distracted is nothing new; however, what has changed is the type and number of distractions we experience daily. They impair our ability to recognize and react to hazards. This can be especially dangerous when working in a high-hazard environment around energized or heavy equipment. It's important to recognize the distractions of technology such as smartphones and smartwatches that reduce our ability to pay attention. Make a conscious decision to focus and reduce distraction in the workplace by mentally committing to a task and avoiding the pitfalls of multitasking.

HPI/JC at WAPA

As an organization, we have learned a lot over the past year about Human Performance Improvement, Just Culture and Safety. The Office of Safety and Occupational Health and HPI/JC have a shared goal of protecting employees, reducing errors and preventing injuries.

In the future, using HPI tools will remain essential to continued improvement of our safety culture, and integrating them into our Safety and Occupational Health practices will be an ongoing effort. This effort includes tailgate meetings, pre-job briefings, supervisor job-site observations, job hazard analysis, peer checking and increased communication at all levels. These practices will contribute to reducing human errors, while also preventing safety incidents and employee injuries.

Safety success at WAPA revolves around the commitment of leadership, managers, employees and the organization to strengthen our safety culture by identifying, managing and reducing hazards through safe work practices, communication and doing what is right. □

Note: The author is WAPA's Safety and Occupational Health Director.

Make clear your personal commitment to safety

A personal commitment to safety is made clear through attributes such as those listed here.

Leadership

- Demonstrated safety leadership.
- Risk-informed decision making.
- Management engagement and time in field.
- Staff recruitment, selection, retention and development.
- Open communication and fostering an environment free from retribution.
- Clear expectations and accountability.

Employee engagement

- Personal commitment to everyone's safety.
- Teamwork and mutual respect.
- Information sharing.
- Participation in work planning and improvement.
- Mindfulness of hazards and controls.

Organizational learning

- Credibility, trust and reporting errors and problems.
- Effective resolution of reported problems.
- Performance monitoring through multiple means.
- Use of learning summaries and past experience.
- Questioning attitude.

Note: This information is adapted from Safety Culture Focus Areas and Associated Attributes: DOE G 450.4-1C, Integrated Safety Management System Guide, Attachment 10.

508 Corner : Tips for accessibility

WAPA's Section 508 team provides tips and tricks to help employees ensure that their documents and web content are successfully compliant and accessible for those with disabilities. Remember: Before any content can be made public, it must be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

PowerPoint presentations are an important tool here at WAPA. WAPA presentations describe what WAPA does, train and teach team members new skills and provide the public and customers with updates about WAPA. Making content accessible to all readers is everyone's responsibility when developing a presentation. And now, Microsoft's accessibility checker tool within PowerPoint makes it easier to identify common accessibility issues.

To run the accessibility checker on a personal computer, in PowerPoint, select File > Info. Select the Check for Issues button and choose Check Accessibility.

Most likely, the checker will ask you to add alternative text to describe any images or other visuals. Right-click on the image and select Edit Alt text, then enter appropriate alternative text in the field that appears in the Alt Text sidebar. If the image is decorative, leave the field blank and check the box next to "mark as decorative."

Follow these other tips when creating PowerPoint presentations:

- Make sure text is not too small, especially if the presentation will be viewed on a projector.
- Do not use color as the only way to convey information.
- Transitions and animations should be simple.
- Complex or automatic transitions and animations can be distracting.
- Use clear and simple language. If you have embedded video, ensure the video is captioned.
- If you have embedded audio, include a transcript. □

Visit **myWAPA, Departments, Public Affairs, Section 508** for resources to help you create, test and remedy the content you share online in compliance with Section 508 requirements. If you still have questions, contact **section508@wapa.gov**



Rapid Recaps

Secretary Granholm visits WAPA's DSW office

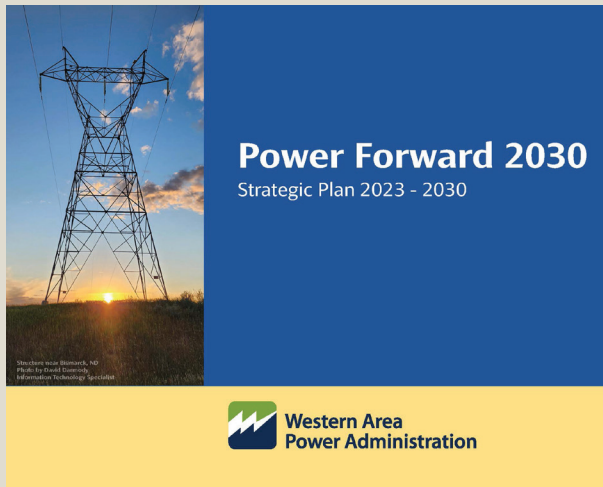
On Friday, Jan. 20, Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm visited Western Area Power Administration's Desert Southwest regional office in Phoenix. During her visit, the Secretary met with WAPA Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** to discuss transmission development and WAPA priorities.

Secretary Granholm toured the Rocky Mountain region's Phoenix office Operations Control Center. DSW senior leaders also briefed the Secretary on DSW regional activities, workforce challenges and system maintenance and restoration after extreme weather events.

The Secretary thanked those she met with for their continued service and recognized the WAPA Maintenance team for providing reliable power in the face of extreme weather and during the COVID pandemic response.



Brief Transmissions



WAPA has a new strategic plan

Power Forward 2030, WAPA's updated strategic plan, was published on Feb. 10, 2023, and represents the culmination of a year-long collaborative process with employees, customers and stakeholders.

The organization-wide strategic plan establishes the path to sustained value now and into the future. It sets forth WAPA's strategic destination through the identification of strategic goals, objectives and initiatives. WAPA leaders and employees will use this plan to prioritize their work to harness strategies into actions that deliver results.

The *Power Forward 2030* strategic goals focus on enhancing what WAPA does best: providing an affordable, stable and renewable source of energy; contributing to grid resiliency and energy delivery reliability; and supporting our dynamic and capable workforce.

WAPA Fitness Policy updated

Good fitness can improve overall wellness, performance and productivity. To support employees in their fitness journey, WAPA maintains a Fitness Program to promote and encourage exercise, through its Fitness Program, Order 343.1B. WAPA's Fitness Order was recently updated to clarify off-site reimbursement benefit criteria, as well as requirements for on-site fitness equipment and facility use.

What you need to know

- Employees must have a signed waiver on file with their HQ/Regional Administrative Officer (AO) to use an on-site fitness facility or any on-site equipment.
- The waiver is valid for the tenure of your employment.
- Employees should refresh themselves on the criteria for requesting reimbursement for off-site fitness-related memberships.

For information about your local on-site fitness facility or equipment, reach out to your local AO. Learn more about WAPA's Fitness Program on the **myWAPA Employee Resources, Benefits, Fitness Program**.



Updated Paid Parental Leave guidance

The Department of Energy updated the paid parental leave guidance through Policy Memorandum #92B. There are several important changes that all employees who wish to use the program should be aware of:

- All Employee Service Agreements must be forwarded to DOE's Human Capital office.
- All employees must provide proof of the date of birth, placement or adoption to the CSR Help Desk before using the paid parental leave. If this is not provided, the leave will be converted from administrative leave to sick leave.
- The ATAAPS code, workorder number and purpose is located on the myWAPA Human Resources site.

All information regarding paid parental leave is located on **myWAPA, Departments, Human Resources, Employee Information, Time and Leave**.

If you have any questions regarding the policy changes, contact your Human Resources Business Partner.

